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AUTHOR	Holden, William R.
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ABSTRACT

This article describes a variety of ways learners can help themselves remember new words, choosing the ones that best suit their learning styles. It is asserted that repeated exposure to new lexical items using a variety of means is the most consistent predictor of retention. The use of verbal, visual, tactile, textual, kinesthetic, and sonic memory aids can and should be introduced to learners as a viable means of improving their ability to recall words. Because each student has his or her own individual learning style, it is important that learners be presented with a variety of strategies from which to choose. In addition to increasing the range, depth, and recall of vocabulary, these techniques also offer learners the opportunity to become more aware of their individual learning styles, an important step on the path to becoming more confident and autonomous learners. The methods offered include the following: association/elaboration method; finger method; grouping method; imagery method; keyword method; loci method; narrative method; peg method; physical response method; pictorial method; word chain method; semantic mapping method; visual method; spatial grouping method; and the sound representation method. (KFT)

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Learning To Learn:
15 Vocabulary Acquisition Activities.
Tips and Hints.

William R. Holden

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Learning to learn: 15 vocabulary acquisition activities

In response to the last questionnaires we sent out, a number of readers asked for more articles about memory and language learning. Here *William R Holden*, who teaches at Hokuriku Universtiy in Japan, describes a variety of ways learners can help themselves to remember new words, choosing the ones that best suit their learning styles.

Despite the volume of research over the last several decades into the role of memory for linguistic items, there have been few conclusions drawn which can as yet be considered axiomatic for language teaching. This can to some extent be attributed to the difficulty of separating the stages of learning, production and communication: applied research in communicative language teaching has often used approaches in which production and communication are considered to reflect learning, yielding less-than-empirical results. Research intended to validate the effectiveness of learning strategies, however, has consistently indicated that activating learners' memories is a necessary first step toward internalization of new linguistic information. 'The principle of vocabulary *learning* (emphasis added) which emerges' according to Carter and McCarthy (1988:12) 'is that the more words are analyzed or are enriched by imagistic or other associations, the more likely it is that they will be retained.'

Earlier research by Stevick (1976) and Johnson-Laird (1983) and more recently by Brown and Perry (1991) has confirmed that integrative strategies have a positive effect on retention because words are stored in associative networks. Anderson (1983) also concluded that memory for concepts can be increased by increasing the number of related ideas (associations) present at either the time of learning or the time of recall, particularly if the associations are well integrated with prior knowledge. Bialystock (1981) and O'Malley *et al* (1985) found that, despite differences in the frequency with which they are employed, the use of learning strategies by both high and low level students promoted recall of vocabulary. More recently, Mangubhai (1991) has demonstrated that 'high achievers' consistently employ more, and more effective, memory strategies than 'low achievers'.

Perhaps the most practical conclusion to be drawn here is that repeated exposure to new lexical items using a variety of means is the most consistent predictor of retention. The use of visual, verbal, tactile,

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textual, kinesthetic and sonic memory aids can and should be introduced to learners as viable means of improving their ability to recall words. Because each learner has his or her own individual learning style, different students will naturally react differently to different strategies; it is therefore important that learners be presented with a number of strategies from which to choose. In addition to increasing the range, depth and recall of vocabulary, these techniques also offer learners the opportunity to become more aware of their individual learning styles, an important step on the path to becoming more confident and autonomous learners.

The following are a number of memory and mnemonic strategies which I have introduced to my own students. The techniques presented are neither new nor particularly novel; they each nevertheless offer learners a chance both to develop the range and breadth of their vocabularies and to reach a better understanding of their own learning styles.

Association/elaboration method

To use this method, try to relate new information in English to information you already know, or relate the new information to itself in a way that helps you remember it. For example, when learning words used to describe the weather, try to remember an experience you have had during that type of weather, imagine a part of the world in which that kind of weather is common, imagine what the land looks like in that region, what the sky looks like during that kind of weather, the times of the year when we experience that kind of weather, etc. This works best when there is a strong connection based on personal experience.

For example: arid – deserts: North Africa, China, Australia, US
frigid – polar regions: Arctic & Antarctic
sultry – tropical areas in Africa, Asia, South America

Finger method

To use this method, simply associate new words with your fingers to help you remember them. This technique is especially useful for things like lists, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, etc. It should to help you recall new information, though it is effective only for a very short time.

For example: index finger = one thousand; index and middle fingers = 2 million; index, middle and ring fingers = 3 billion; index, middle, ring and little fingers = 4 trillion.

Grouping method

To use this method, you should separate new words you learn into units or groups that are easy for you to remember. For example, grammatical function (noun, verb, adjective, etc.), topic (weather, school, personality, etc.) language function (apology, request, permission, etc) opposites, or even words that start with the same letter, i.e. 'A' words, 'B' words, and so on.

For example: personality – friendly, outgoing, shy, quiet
opposites – hot/cold, tall/short, near/far, open/close
verbs – hasten, release, prevent

Imagery method

To use this method, imagine a scene or picture which has a strong association with the word or phrase that you want to remember. An image does not 'mean' the same as the word, but reminds you strongly of the word. For many Americans, for example, the word *freedom* might be associated with the Statue of Liberty, but for some people the image for this word may be running through the night carrying a young child across a fenced border while being chased by soldiers. The image each person has of a word is different because our experiences are different. Sharing and explaining your experiences of words with others can help you remember them more easily. Vivid images are more easily recalled than bland ones.

For example: sleek = a new red Ferrari
justice = the arrest of a notorious criminal
love = a mother holding a child close

Keyword method

To use this method, create sound or sight links between the new word or phrase and a word that sounds similar in your own language. For example, a Spanish person who has just learned the Japanese word *kasa* (umbrella), could think of that sound in Spanish, and make a (Japanese) sentence like 'I always take my *kasa* when I leave my casa on rainy days'. Then, finding the Chinese character for umbrella (傘), the learner could imagine 4 people sitting under the roof of a house, where it is dry. For a Japanese learner trying to remember the English word *pan*, one method is to use the Japanese (originally derived from Portuguese) word パン (bread). Then imagine a loaf of fresh, fragrant bread baking in a pan. This method seems to work better for separate vocabulary words rather than for phrases.

Loci method

To use this method, imagine a place you know well or a route you often travel with which you are very familiar. Then associate the parts or sections of the place (like the rooms in a house or the objects in a drawer, or the shops and houses along a street) with a new word or phrase you've learned. For example, if on your way to school each day you pass a street lined with shops, associate a word with each of the shops, and later, as you recall the shops in order, recall the words that you matched with each one. The next day, say the words again as you pass the shops. Matching a word you want to learn with the shop or place by sound (i.e. they start with the same sound in both languages as in *boulangerie – bread*) or by similarity (*restaurant – waiter*) can aid recall.

Narrative chain method

To use this method, make up a story using the new words in a context or setting that helps you remember them. It works best if you can visualize (see in your mind's eye) the actions or images of each word. Start by grouping the words which you associate with a topic (see Grouping method above) together. Connect these associations by making up a short story containing the words you're trying to learn. Writing the story later is a good way to check how many of the words you remember. Don't worry if the story changes!

For example: If you want to remember the words *rug*, *expensive*, *livid*, *sudden*, *stain*, *wipe* and *relieve*, use the Peg method below to picture an (1) expensive Persian (2) rug. Then imagine that someone has spilled grape juice on it, (3) staining it. The owner (4) all of a sudden becomes very angry, (5) livid. The person who spilled the juice runs to get something to (6) wipe it up with. To the owner's (7) relief, the rug is not damaged.

Peg method

If you're trying to learn words which describe types of weather, think, for example, of the days of the week (the peg) (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...) and associate them with a certain type of weather (Monday, muggy; Tuesday, torpid; Wednesday, windy; Thursday, thundering, etc.) then form a picture in your mind of the sky on such a day. Other possible pegs are the months of the year, the names of friends, classmates and family members, your telephone number, the parts of a car, rooms of a house, or anything you like. Be sure the peg is something you can remember automatically. Alternatively, you can use only the words you're studying. Use numbers as the peg and, following the Narrative Chain method, create a series of images based on the relationship of the words. Number each word in the series of events.

Physical response method

The physical response method requires you to move your body or parts of your body in a certain way that illustrates the meaning of a word. For example, if you're learning the word *tiptoe*, you might imagine a ballerina performing a pirouette on stage, the sound of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, a thief sneaking into your home at night, or, using the Physical Response method, you might instead get up on your tiptoes and dance across the room or prowl like a thief in the night. The Physical Response method relies on your body as well as your brain to help you remember words. Facial expressions are another kind of physical response that can help you recall new vocabulary.

Pictorial method

The Pictorial method is similar to the Imagery method. To use this method, imagine a scene or picture in which you see an image which for you has a strong association with the word, phrase or group of words that you are studying. Remember, an image does not 'mean' the same as the word, but reminds you strongly of the word. Then draw a picture of the image you have for that word or phrase. To use the same example, an American might have a picture of the Statue of Liberty to help him remember the French word *la liberté*.

Word chain method

This is a variation on the Japanese game 'shiritori'; try to connect the words by the way they are spelled, matching the last letter of a word with the first letter of the following word. For example: *career*, *relocate*, *executive*, *entertain*, *neighbour*, *r*...., where each new word has as its first letter the last letter of the previous word. You can use any words that you know, but try to include in the chain all the new words that you're learning.

Semantic mapping method

To use this method, try arranging a group of words into a picture which has the main idea or new word at the centre or the top, and then think of words which you associate with the central (**bold**) word.

For example:

chat, study, have lunch, play sports

friends

tests, homework, serious teachers — **school** — ***classrooms*** desks, chairs, blackboard,

activities

sports, clubs, field trips, projects

Visual method

The Visual method is similar to the Imagery and Pictorial methods. To use this method, imagine a scene, picture, place or situation containing an image you strongly associate with the word, phrase or group of words that you want to remember. Then draw a picture of the image you have for that word or phrase in a vocabulary notebook, and label the parts or the picture.

Spatial grouping method

Try writing words in various ways on paper to help you recall them. Don't simply write columns of words that all look alike, but 'draw' pictures using words. Examples:

the body

head
shoulder shoulder
chest
ribs
waist
pelvis
thigh thigh
knee knee
calf calf
ankle ankle
foot foot
toe toe

directions (a bird)

north
northwest northeast
west east
southwest southeast
south

Sound representation method

To use this method, associate the sound of a new word (*fierce*) with a word that you already know which starts with a similar sound (*fear*).Then think *fierce=fear: I fear the fierce lion.*

Similarly, think *shout/shower: I shouted in the shower because the water was too hot*;

or *steam/steel: the water hissed and turned to steam as it hit the hot steel.*

These can also be made into tongue-twisters.

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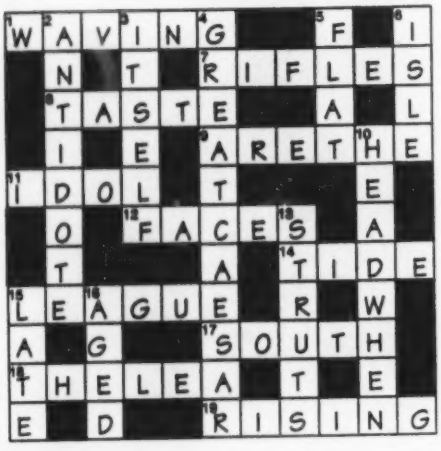
William R Holden

Answer to About Language: Dead Poets' Crossword



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Across

1 Stevie Smith, *Not Waving but Drowning*

7 Wilfred Owen, *Anthem for Doomed Youth*

8 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

9 TS Eliot, *The Hollow Men*

11 J Milton Hayes, *The Green Eye of the Yellow God*

12 Charles Lamb, *The Old Familiar Faces*

14 Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar, IV: 3*

15 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*

17 John Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale*

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Down

2 William Congreve, *The Way of the World*, IV: 14

3 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I, ii

4 Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, III, ii

5 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I, ii

6 Shakespeare, *Richard II*, II, i

8 Rudyard Kipling, *If –*

13 Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V,v

15 George Gordon, Lord Byron, *So we'll go no more a-roving*

16 WB Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*